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The Diary of a Mummy

At about 2 p.m. on the 30th of January 1999 a meat industry worker was out hunting rabbits in the snow-covered wetlands of Kushiro in Hokkaido when he came across a dilapidated hut made of plastic. Thinking it the perfect spot to eat his lunch, he tentatively called out “Is anyone there?”. When he poked his head inside, he found an unexpected occupant had beaten him to it. Lying on a platform covered with straw was a mummy. Still rugged up against the cold, it was lightly coated in dust and frost. The exposed parts of its cracked skin were like a dark brown leather boot, its eyes had sunk deep in their sockets, and it was bone dry. The lower half of the face was covered in beard growth, there was a film of white mould on its bottom lip, and its abdomen had totally caved in. Evidently the corpse had somehow managed to avoid decomposition, becoming instead nicely desiccated. Perhaps it had lost weight while still alive, to make it easier to become mummified.

Scattered around the straw platform were a hatchet and nail clippers, some spent candles, a plastic container, and a washbasin holding the ashes of burnt paper, along with a suitcase and some clothing. A radio and a dozen or so books stood on a shelf made out of branches. There were no signs of dishes or food, nor the slightest hint of any cooking activity. Just what was he doing out here? Lodged between the corpse’s legs was a notebook. This corpse was kind enough to come complete with an explanation of its own cause of death—the notebook contained a faithful record of the process leading up to that event.

The mummy was taken away the same day. The hunter returned home empty-handed, having found a mummy but no rabbits.

Based on the account in the notebook, the forensic specialists at a leading medical college and the investigating detectives who examined the body identified the cause of death as suicide by starvation. This must have called for enormous resolve and stoicism, but the motive remained unclear. The deceased was a male person estimated to be about 40 years of age, measuring 173 centimeters in height and weighing 35 kilograms. He had been dead for about 100 days. There were no indications of his name or occupation or what he had been like when alive, and attempts to identify him ran into difficulty. Despite various clues in the form of his skeletal characteristics, blood type, fingerprints and handwriting, nobody in the police databank of prior offenders or missing persons seemed to match the dead man’s description. All that was certain was that he must have been someone out of the ordinary. Apparently nobody was looking for him and there were none to mourn his departure, so he was forgotten by the world. There were signs that he himself was well aware of this. Here is his complete diary.

Day One, 7th of August 1998

I’ve given up eating. Had my final meal at a sushi place in town. Although it was my last meal, I could only eat about the same as usual. It was cheap, so I had quite a lot of money left over. Everything I need for my suicide was in my suitcase, but I dropped in at a supermarket to buy various things just in case. Candles, a hose, a funnel, gum tape, eau de cologne, nail clippers, cotton buds, wet tissues, stomach medicine, a tin washbasin, plastic bags and so on. You need money for emergencies, but it seems this is one right now, so I blew the rest on playing pinball.

The spot I've chosen for carrying out my plan uninterrupted is the wetlands here in Kushiro. It's not that I have any particular ties or connections with Kushiro or Hokkaido—it's just that when I was a student I came here once and thought it would be a good place to die. After leaving the cycling track and walking for about an hour, I decided to set up my hut here. All I need is a tiny shelter, built using the existing trees. I hacked off some thick branches and positioned them across the trunks of four trees and placed three layers of vinyl over the top. The basic shape was ready by the time dusk fell. Then I hurriedly collected some straw and ditch reeds and spread them on the ground. There were lots of big mosquitoes, so I started a fire to get some smoke going. My clothes ended up reeking of smoke.

Day Two, 8th of August

No symptoms out of the ordinary. The floor is dampish with just a layer of straw, so I put some branches together to make a simple bed. While I was at it, I knocked together a shelf for my books and bits and pieces. Dug a ditch around the hut for drainage. Worked hard. At night I was dying for some food, and drank lots of water. I'd love something sweet to eat.

Day Three, 9th of August

Heard Bach's *Musical Offering* on the radio. When I became absorbed in it, my hunger just vanished. So perhaps music is edible. Had a bowel movement in the evening. Is this what they mean by colon cleansing?

Day Four, 10th of August

Don't feel any hunger at all. They reckon you can last for a week without water, and for a month with water. It'd be nice if it was over in a week, but things would be tough without water, so I brought along one and a half liters of mineral water. Still had 500 cc left, but a while ago I accidentally spilled it. Does this mean I'll die sooner?

Day Five, 11th of August

Raining since morning. The heavens have ordered me not to die just yet. I used bent twigs to keep some plastic bags open, and collected drinking water by hanging them up where the rain was getting in or streaming down off the roof. When it rains, it sounds like I'm inside a drum. I can't even hear the radio. Once it fines up, I'm going to put some straw on the roof. Read all day.

Day Six, 12th of August

Had a bowel movement. I guess my stomach must be empty by now. In the evening I had a headache and stomach cramps. Felt a bit better when I listened to Mozart.

Dreamt that all my old girlfriends were folk-dancing in the nude. In the midst of their circle I was pounding a stake into the ground. Jerked off when I woke up. To think that I still get it up even though I haven't eaten anything for a week. But after masturbating, my body suddenly feels heavy.

Day Eight, 14th of August

Time is distorted, not moving. If I keep looking at my watch, the seconds feel like minutes. I wish I had a watch that would make time pass more quickly. I've decided on when I'll listen to the radio—from two to four in the afternoon. There's an FM program of classical music on then. The female announcer has a bell-like voice. She's the only person I have anything to do with. Even without eating a thing, you can still fall in love.

I'm sleeping for longer periods. While awake, I suffer from dizzy spells. My plastic hothouse is like a haunted house. I want someone to come and rescue me. I'm peeing more frequently. It's an effort to have to go outside to piss. Haven't had a crap since Day Six.

Day Ten, 16th of August

Rain. This means I can drink fresh rainwater. The sound of the rain is unsettling. When I close my eyes, it sounds like the footsteps of someone coming to visit me. I think it's still too soon to say it's the god of Death, but I can't abandon the faint hope that perhaps it might be the goddess of Fortune. I don't care who it is, as long as they'll talk with me.

Day Eleven, 17th of August

Heard on the news that three close friends from a junior high school in Tokyo drowned themselves together. Apparently their motive is unknown. Their friends were being interviewed on the radio.

Day Twelve, 18th of August

Blood in my urine. My head's clear, but my whole body is lethargic. I'm spending more time lying on my bed. Reading. Beckett's *Malone Dies*. I can totally relate to it. It's a book you can't comprehend unless you're fasting. Gave the radio a rest today.

Day Thirteen, 19th of August

I've lost quite a lot of weight. And my face looks like a dead person's. Slight improvement when I shaved. I'm hanging on to life by eating away my own flesh.

Day Fourteen, 20th of August

Was that a typhoon? I thought my plastic hut would be blown away by the gale-force winds and rain. In the afternoon the wind died down for a while, so I went outside and used some branches to reinforce the hut. My body won't obey me anymore, so it was hard going.

Day Fifteen, 21st of August

Slept about 15 hours. When I turned on the radio, they were broadcasting a night game of baseball. Drank some fresh rainwater. Had a foresty smell about it. My body hurts all over. It seems as if my flesh is being whittled away from the inside. Dreamt I was licking *miso* paste.

Day Sixteen, 22nd of August

Another storm today. Lightning struck close by on several occasions, and each time it reverberated through my head. Why doesn't it strike my hut? I've decided to listen to the radio at night, because when I'm lying down in the darkness I lose track of where I am. If I respond to every single word coming from the radio I don't lose myself, and two hours pass in a flash. I keep my finger on the switch the whole time, and make a point of turning it off as soon as I get sleepy. Sometimes what they're carrying on about seems so ridiculous that I feel as if I'm already over there in the next world, listening to the broadcasts of this world.

Day Seventeen, 23rd of August

There was some blood in my urine. When I was at high school I was absolutely bushed when we went on a training camp for our handball club, and I had bloody urine then, but that was the last time. So perhaps fasting is a sport. When night fell, I had sharp stabbing pains in my stomach. Clutching my tummy, I curled up in a ball and listened to popular *enka* songs, but that only made the pain worse.

Day Eighteen, 24th of August

All the fat on my sides and back has completely disappeared. My face looks like that of a boxer who's been dieting. But my eyes glitter intensely. If anyone saw me now, they'd probably run away in fear. I'm gradually starting to look like bleached bones. No desire to eat. It seems as if my hunger nerves are no longer functioning. I can utterly relate to anorexics. Once hunger goes beyond a certain point, the very thought of food makes your stomach hurt. If I were to wolf down some noodles or *tendon* rice or curry right now, I'd probably die from the shock. By now my stomach would probably reject food as a foreign object, as if it were germs.

Tonight was a bright moonlit night. I'd like to die on a night like this. But I'd rather die in the daytime. They say life goes out on the ebb tide. Around midnight or noon. I'd like to die in the light.

Day Nineteen, 25th of August

During the day I had stomach pains and a headache. Received an unusual visitor in the afternoon. A centipede was crawling over my bed. No urge to eat it. I've heard that a child was locked in a tiny room by his parents and given nothing to eat, so he caught and ate insects and a mouse that came to nibble on his ears. Adults who abuse children should be sentenced to a fast.

Day Twenty, 26th of August

Felt like vomiting, even though there's nothing left to bring up. Broke out in a greasy sweat for a while after I got up. Reverted to my normal stomach pains from about noon.

There's still time. If I retraced the path I took to get here, I could return to life. I'd be bound to meet someone if I walked for just an hour. I'd have no feeling of shame. It's not as if I'm wanted by the police or yakuza, and it wouldn't bother me if my name was on the news. Fasting's no crime. In a week I'd be back to my old weight of 65 kilos, and no doubt I'd live for another 20 or 30 years. Rather, I would be forced to live. Just like in the past, still with no involvement in this world. Since this world is not suited for me to carry on living, I've given notice to the other world that I'm moving there. It's too late to change my mind.

Nor do I feel any particular attachment to this world. It was with suicide in mind that I made my preparations to fast. I believed I could reverse the insignificance of my life by the manner of my death. This is like the ritual of *seppuku* in the samurai world, which is a kind of corporate society, where those who could never become anything more than stepping-stones for others' success exalt a man in his final moments. For just once in their lives, let's give those dupes who could never have their own way except emotionally and who never had a single opportunity to express their own views the chance to be respected by others. Isn't that what *seppuku* is all about? This act erases all the humiliations suffered in this world.

If I were to commit *seppuku* I'd just end up a laughing stock. The novelist Mishima Yukio disemboweled himself, half mimicking this ritual and half as a critique of Japanese society, and this had the effect of warning anyone considering it that henceforth nobody was allowed to perform this act. I too am under Mishima's curse. So I came up with a different way of dying—fasting.

I have already given notice of my death, but I think it will be a while yet before my turn comes round. I stopped eating on the 7th of August, so I reckon I'm about exactly halfway between life and death. Is that why I've begun to have doubts? Today is Day 20, so perhaps they'll come for me on the 40th day. I'm exactly half-dead. No doubt that's why I'm having headaches and stomach pains. Let's hope the pain starts to lessen from tomorrow on. A light rain fell tonight.

Day Twenty-One, 27th of August

Yesterday I wrote my will, so there's nothing more to write. The pain in my stomach is as bad as ever. My bedstraw had gotten damp, so I put it out in the sun to dry. The slightest movement makes it difficult to breathe, and my palpitations get worse. I wipe myself down with a damp towel. I'm not sweating a drop, and nor is my body giving off any oils. My metabolism seems to have stopped functioning long ago.

What will I do if someone finds me before I die? Should I just quietly abandon my fast, or explain my decision and have them leave? There's absolutely no sign or sound of human life here. If somebody finds their way to this spot, I'll interpret it as a command from some god to live.

In the evening I could hear the sound of insects. I'm not alone.

Day Twenty-Two, 28th of August

My stomach has dilated like the Ethiopian refugee children I once saw on TV. Why does it hurt so much even though I'm not eating anything? I'm terrified of dreaming about food. I was woken by a dream in which I was stealing food over the shoulder of somebody eating spaghetti, and my stomach has been hurting ever since then. No doubt just the mere thought of food sets my stomach in motion as a reflex, which is why I end up in pain.

Day Twenty-Three, 29th of August

Couldn't bear the pain any longer, so took some stomach medicine. It's absurd to be taking medication when I'm trying to die. Cleaned my ears out in the evening.

Day Twenty-Four, 30th of August

The water tastes awful. Is water poisoning the cause of my stomach pains? I'm freezing, even though it's summer. I'm wearing a jumper, but I'm still shivering. My mind is the only thing that's clear. Today I read *The Inferno* from *The Divine Comedy*. I've never been a believer, but I'd like to show respect to the many gods in the world, because a god somewhere might gather me up out of pity. While reading *The Inferno* I was wondering who I'd meet first in the afterworld. Turned on the radio when I got sick of reading, to be greeted by a delightful female voice asking, "Did you have another fulfilling day today?". If only a woman like that would be on the reception desk at the entrance to the land of the dead.

Day Twenty-Five, 31st of August

Things were a bit easier than yesterday. Brushed my teeth and shaved. In the afternoon it started raining, and I was so delighted I took all my clothes off and went outside to wash my hair and body. I'm sure people would prefer a clean corpse.

Day Twenty-Six, 1st of September

My arms and legs are down to half their normal thickness. And my face is so tiny it could fit in the palm of a hand. There's just a covering of skin over my skull. If I'd seen myself a month ago as I am now, I wouldn't have recognized myself. Guess my weight is also down to about two-thirds. Yet my body feels heavy. As well as the stomach pains and headaches, my arms and legs have started to feel numb. My eyes are dim, making it difficult to read. When I happened to glance at the palm of my hand I noticed several horizontal indentations in my lifeline. Harbingers of death? Yet defying my desire to die, my flesh struggles to live. This manifests itself as pain.

Day Twenty-Seven, 2nd of September

A mosquito stung me in the neck. Any mosquito that would suck the blood of such a bloodless person as me must be pretty hungry. I even feel a strange affection for it. My neck itches, but I murmured 'May God protect you' to the mosquito that sucked my blood. It seems I've become kind-hearted.

Day Twenty-Eight, 3rd of September

Yesterday I accidentally fell sleep with the radio on. Is that why I had so many different dreams? In the broadcasting booth at a professional baseball game an Indian I didn't recognize was sitting with coach Nagashima, who was cheerfully chatting away incoherently. "Goodness, there's a long queue at the gates of Hades, and they're selling hot dogs and coke, but if you go and buy them you'll have trouble later. Therefore what you need in the next world is a hungry spirit. I too was kept waiting for quite a long time after I committed suicide, and now I'm a commentator in the broadcasting booth in the afterworld, but ... how can I put it ... dying takes guts too, doesn't it." I felt enormously cheered by his words.

Then there was this dream. A bright red train is weaving its way through a garden in which dwarves who have become vegetables are blooming, and bananas are being scattered from the windows of the train. In another dream my body is being stretched and folded and swung around until finally it turns into *ramen* noodles.

My mind is the only part of me that's active.

Day Twenty-Nine, 4th of September

It's cold. I wrapped myself up in a blanket all day. Blood doesn't seem to be getting to the tips of my arms and legs. If I walked a kilometer I could reach the cycling track. Yet even knowing that this could be my last chance to get help, I didn't change my mind. I'd hate to die on the road. I felt better when I thought that the only course is for me to die. I can lie here. I can move my upper body pretty freely, though my lower half is weak. For a ridiculous moment I thought it was because I don't get enough exercise.

Day Thirty, 5th of September

My stomach pains were the worst they've ever been so far. Took some medicine. I'll probably die tomorrow or so. It's been exactly a month today.

Day Thirty-One, 6th of September

I feel pain, so I'm alive.

Day Thirty-Two, 7th of September

The radio is fading—my companion is weakening too. Just like my voice is getting croaky. I'm still alive even though I haven't eaten anything for a month, but once its batteries go the radio will no longer give out a peep.

Despite wearing two pairs of socks and a jumper and a winter coat, I can't stop shivering. It seems winter has come to the wetlands. If things go on like this, I might freeze to death before I starve. Even if I wanted to go outside and make a fire, I no longer have the strength to collect firewood—although I'd be in heaven if I had a cup of tea.

Day Thirty-Three, 8th of September

The pain in my stomach comes in cycles. It attacks like a geyser spouting hot water every few minutes. Perhaps my body is in sync with the rhythm of the earth. When I'm in pain I can't even think, but when it dies down I can write my notes in this way. Priests who have attained Buddhahood in the flesh must have suffered from headaches and stomach pains and chills for some time too. No doubt their faith sustained them, but for an unbeliever like me, enduring it has no meaning. If I'd jumped off a cliff or hanged myself I would have died immediately, but instead I'm deliberately trying to experience every nuance of suffering for over a month before I die. I can't say it's ludicrous and stop now. Even if I wanted to jump off a cliff I don't have the strength to make it to the edge. And there's no rope handy to hang myself with.

As long as I'm not in pain, I can pass the days tranquilly, but at night the very darkness hurts. The only sound coming from the radio is like the buzzing of a mosquito. There are three candles left. I'm keeping them for a night I can't sleep.

Day Thirty-Four, 9th of September

The cold last night was like needles being stuck into my whole body. It went beyond cold to pain. I ended up using a candle. My pulse is abnormally fast. I can feel my heart pumping blood throughout my body in an effort to raise my temperature. My body is frantically trying to stay alive.

It drizzled during the day. The chirping of the wild birds soothes my mind. Sensing that someone is near the hut, I call out "I'm here." I thought the taxi driver who is to take me to the other world had lost his way and was getting sick of looking for me. I can't make it to the River Styx on foot. My legs won't obey me any more.

Although I'm fasting because I wanted to observe the process of my own death, it's boring just thinking about death all day long. But while idly listening to the birds twittering, the thought came into my mind that I was already dead at the point when I started fasting, and that made me feel a lot easier. Death is just the remaining few percent.

Day Thirty-Five, 10th of September

The radio gave up the ghost before me, so I'm terrified of the nights. I disappear in the pitch darkness. If I stretch out my arms or poke out my tongue or blink, I'm not there. Perhaps someone else is there instead of me. When I wake in the night I think this here is the other world. In the darkness there are no subjects, no verbs, no adjectives. Nor any present, past or future tenses. Just thoughts going round and round in my head. Always half-formed, and with no beginning and no end. It's just that I have to be thinking something to alleviate even slightly the uneasy feeling that I'm not here. Once I wake up, I can't get back to sleep until the sun rises. If I stop thinking, I lose my presence of mind and call out in fear. My scream is hoarse and repulsive. When the darkness starts to lighten from my feet up, for a moment I can forget death. Light is a medicine, the dark a poison. But my joy in greeting the morning is short-lived, and then the suffering of being alive, that stabbing pain, is imposed on me in return for not having died. Of course, even at night my stomach hurts and my head too. Far more than in the daytime. Probably the night pain is the pain of death, and the day pain is the pain of life. Whatever the case, the pain is absolutely not worth it. Disembowelment would be far easier. Compared with starving to death, *seppuku* or hanging or being shot or jumping off a building or dying from poison or gas would all be like a stroll in the park. I read somewhere that spies always carry potassium cyanide with them. In an emergency they're prepared to swallow this so as not to be held accountable. But that means they end up dying at someone else's convenience. At least at the time of death we should be able to die for our own self. There are many different ways to commit suicide, but fasting is a highly individual mode of death where you confront yourself and struggle with yourself over a long period. This manner of dying is truly not worth while. But I'm proud of having endured this suffering for as long as 35 days. I've done something that nobody would want to imitate.

Day Thirty-Six, 11th of September

When I flicked on the radio just for something to do, it was playing an opera I remember having heard before. The batteries have recovered a bit, so I was able to listen for about an hour. My whole body is revitalized. And I've plucked up the courage to die.

Day Thirty-Seven, 12th of September

It's raining on and off. Apparently pigeons perceive the world in two different dimensions. A world with water and a world without water. Human beings can create diverse worlds in their minds. Even while still alive we can conceive of a world after death. But sometimes this ability is annoying. All I want now is simply to die, without thinking anything. I can fully understand why terminal cancer patients want to commit euthanasia.

Day Thirty-Eight, 13th of September

My batteries haven't run out yet. My breathing is a little uneven. I can feel death so close that I could touch it if I stretched out my hand. The dull pain in my anus and knees and back has gotten worse. I guess the soul requires enormous energy to leave the body. The soul eats the flesh, storing up energy. Before long it should be able to depart my body. We're entering the countdown.

Day Thirty-Nine, 14th of September

My handwriting has changed. And I'm having difficulty remembering how to write the characters. I wonder if life in the afterworld is enjoyable.

Day Forty, 15th of September

Today is the day I'm scheduled to die. I can't stand up any more. Come to think of it, by fasting, Buddha discovered how to live, and Moses likewise fasted for exactly 40 days and received the Commandments from God. Christ fasted for 40 days so as to be able to resist the temptations offered him by Satan. In terms of the number of days, I'm right up there with these holy people, but I haven't been enlightened in the slightest. But they must have been incredibly strong, since after fasting for 40 days they walked on their own two feet back to their people. I can't walk any more. All I can do is wait until I turn into a corpse. It's not as if I have any desire to become a saint or anything, but I wish I had built up my legs more. I used to be proud of my good health. Until now I've never really been sick. And the only time I've ever been in hospital was when I broke my leg playing sandlot baseball.

Anticipating that I would eventually become bedridden, I'd prepared a specially designed toilet. Under the bed I placed a largish funnel with a lid and connected a hose up to it, and it's set up so as to drain into the ditch I've dug around the hut. My penis has shriveled up and is a pitiful sight. I can only shake out a few drops of urine.

Day Forty-One, 16th of September

Last night I lit a candle and paid tribute to the holy men who had endured a 40-day fast. Physically I was in pain, but mentally I felt great. I sensed these saints close to me, and Christ and Buddha both seemed my friends.

Day Forty-Two, 17th of September

The legs soon give in, but my mind works well even without any nutrition. Perhaps it doesn't consume much power? Dreamt lots of dreams during the day.

Day Forty-Three, 18th of September

A good day today. I made it through till morning without waking up once in the night. It was a fine clear day. I still had chills and was in pain, but it gives me some consolation to think that the body feeling these symptoms is getting smaller. My skin is now like a dried apricot. And it has an unpleasant odour. I guess this is the smell of death. I sprinkled on some eau de cologne. Nothing better than turning into a corpse that gives off a pleasant fragrance.

Rain in the early afternoon. Urinating each morning and afternoon is a major undertaking. I still piss even though I'm only having a lick or so of water. Anyway, I only have to worry about this major task while I'm still conscious. Some time I'll slip into a coma, and it'll just flow of its own accord. Eventually my heart will stop, and in reaction my soul will take wing.

Day Forty-Four, 19th of September

The worst stomach pain and headaches I've experienced so far. Lost consciousness twice, at noon and about 3 o'clock. I'd better think about my dying words.

At night I lit the remaining part of the candle I used on the 15th. I watched the flame flicker in the draft. There are three books I still haven't read. Not that they would be of any use in the next world. Tearing up *The Divine Comedy* page by page, I burnt the pages in the washbasin.

Day Forty-Five, 20th of September

Out of the blue there was a young woman standing next to my pillow, wearing a torn blouse, stockings full of holes, and a muddy skirt. She was nobody I knew. Nothing surprises me now. Thinking she had come from the world of the dead to fetch me, I stretched out my hand and said "Take me where you will. The pain and cold are beyond bearing."

"There's nowhere to go.", she answered carelessly.

"You've come from the afterworld, right?"

"I haven't been there yet."

"So you're alive then?"

"I can't say."

Turning a sad profile towards me, she began to tell me about herself.

"Quite a long time ago I was raped and killed in the forest by a man wearing a beret and posing as an artist. I thought I'd be taken to the next world, but I waited and waited and nobody came to get me, so I decided to walk there myself. Somehow I managed to make my way to the River Styx and boarded a boat, but"

"You mean you never made it to the other world?"

"I was the only passenger, and the captain wouldn't set me down. According to him, there *is* no afterworld."

"That's absurd!"

"Apparently the great beyond is an illusion to set at rest the minds of people who are about to die. Nowhere is there any place to ease the minds of those who are already dead."

"That's not how it's supposed to be. So what are the dead meant to do? If there's no land of the dead, doesn't it mean they're destined to wander for infinity?"

"At first I thought the captain was lying. I pleaded repeatedly for him to take me to the next world, but he was adamant that there's no such world. Asking another captain passing by on the river produced the same answer."

"So what are you doing now?"

"The captain takes me to lots of different places. The Cape of Good Hope and Antarctica, and also to the Dead Sea and Lake Baikal. He's really good to me, so now we're living together."

"How did you get here?"

"Via the Amazon."

“Where’s your companion?”

“Over there.”

She pointed to where a small and muddy yacht was floating on the marshes outside my hut.

“What should I do?”

Without responding, she left the hut. When I called out “Wait!”, the yacht left bounded off. Coming to myself with a start and taking a closer look, I realized that what had seemed to be a yacht was a rabbit. Bloody bad omen. Perhaps tonight will be my last.

Day Forty-Six, 21st of September

I’m alive. What shall I do if there really is no afterworld? I don’t want to die if after death the night terrors and pain all over are going to continue. Is death no release from suffering? No, that’s not right. It’s just that my mind is exhausted. These delusions occur because I’m not a believer. I suddenly recall the lyrics of *The Drunk Sent Back from Heaven*. I fall asleep, repeatedly hypnotizing myself that I’m somewhere where “the wine is good and the women are beautiful”.

Day Forty-Seven, 22nd of September

I’m cold. Especially after urinating, it seems as if I’ve had cold water thrown all over me. My arms have also lost their strength. When I turn over in bed it feels as if I’m operating a robot arm. My heart is beating frantically.

Day Forty-Eight, 23rd of September

Hope I encounter a nice captain at the River Styx.

Day Forty-Nine, 24th of September

My soul is weak, so it’s finding it difficult to depart. Release me from my bodily suffering! My chest is being crushed. I feel like discarded socks. There’s no body inside any more.

Day Fifty, 25th of September

Where is the terminus of the Tokyo Loop Line? I’ve already been round dozens of times. This pain train stops at every single station. I want to hurry up and reach the depot.

Day Fifty-One, 26th of September

I wonder if you can survive with just bones and a heart? I intend to die by October.

Day Fifty-Two, 27th of September

I have to write a letter to the immigration officials in the other world: My soul will be arriving in two or three days. Please duly accept it.

Day Fifty-Three, 28th of September

I’m fed up with this. Goodbye.

Day Fifty-Four, 29th of September

The king or superintendent or manager of the afterworld is not there anymore. Has that world turned into a desert? Even souls would get bored in a desert, so I want to get on the boat. But I don't have any money.

Day Fifty-Five, 30th of September

I feel like bursting out laughing when I think I'm still alive. I should get in the *Guinness Book of Records*.

Day Fifty-Six, 1st of October

Feel nauseous. My chest hurts. I think I'd feel better if I vomited. No doubt I'd vomit up my soul.

Day Fifty-Seven, 2nd of October

It hurts. I can't die.

Day Fifty-Eight, 3rd of October

Nausea. I want to get in the boat soon.

Day Fifty-Nine, 4th of October

I can hear laughter coming from the radio.

Day Sixty, 5th of October

Someone's here.

Day Sixty-One, 6th of October

There are lots of people. The river is flowing towards me.

Day Sixty-Two, 7th of October

There's a light.

- I consulted "Kiga-shi no ichirei" [A case study of death by starvation] in *Hōigaku no jissai to kenkyū* [Research and Practice in Forensic Medicine] 27, 1984, 145-152.
- I dedicate this to all the people on a hunger strike, or those fasting, and to the anorexics of the world.
